

Peak Industry Body Updates

With this year's Annual General Meetings taking place in October and November, here's the highlights from each Association chair and confirmation of the Committees for the next year.



The new Committee elected at this year's AGM are:

President: Andrew Bell

Vice President: Rob King

Treasurer: James Kellaway

Secretary: Sally Jolly

Members:

John Simonetta

Joshua Clementson

Devinder Knunkun

President's Report from Andrew Bell

It has certainly been an interesting and, at times, challenging twelve months for the Australian blueberry industry. Despite the ups and downs, our sector continues to demonstrate resilience, collaboration, and a strong commitment to improvement and innovation.

While the activity of this Committee has been somewhat limited due to the growing role of Berries Australia, it's worth highlighting just how successful that arrangement has proven to be. The outcomes achieved on behalf of members have been tangible and positive, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved. A special mention must go out to Christian Parsons, who has long served on the ABGA committee and Berries Australia, including a term as President of the ABGA. Christian has moved on to other endeavours within Costa, and I thank him for his valuable contribution over the years.

From a production standpoint, our winter-spring season was impacted by weather events across the Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast regions. Fortunately, this was partially offset by stronger pricing, but it remains a reminder of the volatility our growers face. Another significant issue has been the ongoing legal proceedings in the NSW Planning and Environment Court, where we are contesting Coffs Harbour City Council's position that nets and tunnels constitute farm buildings and therefore require development approvals. The hearing is set for 11 November, and the outcome has the potential to set a precedent that would affect growers across NSW.

On a more positive note, our joint berries marketing campaign continues to deliver strong results. The ABGA has contributed \$200,000 towards the campaign, which strategically flexes to highlight each berry type during its peak production period. This collaborative approach has strengthened our collective presence in the market and reinforced the positive image of Australian berries.

Our research and development work remains a cornerstone of our efforts. The root wrapping project continues to progress, the Chili Thrip and Leaf Roller project has been contracted, and important work is ongoing in the area of chemical permits, ensuring growers have the tools and confidence to manage crops effectively and sustainably.

Finally, it's pleasing to end on a high note. We have recently been granted market access to Vietnam for the export of fresh fruit: our first protocol market. This is a major achievement and a testament to the hard work and persistence of Jenny and her team, to whom we owe a great deal of thanks. It will be exciting to see Australian blueberries on shelves in Vietnam in the coming months. I would, however, remind all producers that the market's demand is for premium-quality fruit; this new opportunity must not become a dumping ground for lower-grade produce.

Thank you once again to everyone involved in supporting and advancing our industry over the past year. Your dedication and professionalism continue to make the Australian blueberry industry one to be proud of.



The new Committee elected at this year's AGM are:

President: Gavin Scurr

Vice President: Andrew Terry

Treasurer: Richard McGruddy

Secretary: Kate Sutherland

Members:

Manpreet Sidhu

Christy Poynton

Chairman's Report from Gavin Scurr

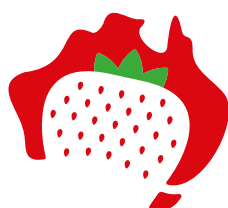
It has been a year of transition and progress for our industry, marked by collaboration and consolidation across the berry sector. One of the most significant developments has been the continued move from individual commodity groups to the unified Berries Australia model. This structure, with its five dedicated subcommittees covering marketing, strawberry propagation, sustainability, R&D, and BerryQuest, is now operating effectively and delivering real benefits through shared focus and coordination.

In the spirit of better communication, all association committee members should now be receiving Berries Australia meeting minutes, ensuring everyone stays informed about what's happening at the national level. This increased transparency helps align our efforts and strengthens our collective voice as an industry.

It has been a roller-coaster year for raspberries and blackberries, with unpredictable weather and fluctuating prices creating challenges. Autumn pricing was difficult, but market conditions have since improved and are now performing better than expected. More broadly, fruit prices outside traditional peak periods have strengthened, highlighting the importance of managing production peaks collectively.

Weather impacts have been mixed around the country. Tasmania suffered severe winds, losing more tunnel skins this year than in the previous five combined, while Queensland experienced what many consider one of their best seasons in years.

Despite the challenges, the year has demonstrated the value of working together. With continued cooperation under the Berries Australia framework, we are well placed to build a resilient and profitable future for all growers.



STRAWBERRIES
A U S T R A L I A

The new Committee elected at this year's AGM are:

Chair: Simon Dornauf

Vice Chair: Nathan Baronio

Treasurer: Adrian Schultz

Members:

Anthony Yewers

Clarrisa Cincotta

Jamie Michael

Chairman's Report from Simon Dornauf

This year has seen strong progress across the strawberry industry, supported by the continued evolution of the Berries Australia structure. Recent board changes and the effective operation of several subcommittees have provided clearer focus, better coordination, and stronger strategic leadership. I would especially like to acknowledge Nathan Baronio for his excellent leadership of the Marketing Subcommittee, which has already strengthened our national marketing approach.

From a production perspective, the southern season performed well, with favourable conditions delivering good fruit and solid pricing. In Queensland, growers faced challenges, but this has not been the worst season on record. Despite weather pressures and regional variability, many have managed to maintain production and adapt effectively.

A major achievement this year has been the industry's progress in blueberry export development. There is also promising potential for strawberry exports, with ongoing medfly-related work expected to unlock new markets once regulatory requirements are finalised.

Another highlight was BerryQuest 2025 in Hobart, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback from growers, researchers, exhibitors and international guests. The strong turnout and high-quality content demonstrated the importance of bringing our industries together. Planning is already underway to build on this success at BerryQuest 2027, ensuring it remains a world-class event.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved with Strawberries Australia Inc. Your ongoing commitment and collaboration continue to drive our industry forward.